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ART. I. — THE FREEDMEN AT PORT ROYAL.

THE peculiarity with which slavery usually stamps its victims is effected not so much by a positive brand of its own as by simply removing him from that contact with circumstance which is the normal condition of growth. Outside of slavery, even in almost every depth of barbarism, circumstances serve to increase human power. But in slavery, not only are natural rights denied, but, what is quite as injurious, necessary wants are supplied; everything contributes to the repression of faculty. The slaveholder's institution is a nursery for perpetuating infancy; and the more enlightened the nurse, the more successful his efforts. The world has waited for the nineteenth century and republican institutions to develop slavery in its hugest and most direful proportions; and now that the man-owner's reckless pride has made its fatal mistake, the most shameful spectacle that ever saddened earth is opened for the nations to behold,—the spectacle of a race of stunted, misshapen children, writhing from the grasp of that people which, in so many respects, is the foremost of the age.

It is this immaturity that occasions the chief difficulty in analyzing the negro's nature, as we see it in the South. In each separate faculty of his mental and moral constitution we miss the effect of training. No tendency has had scope to display its direction and vigor. Careful study is required, therefore, of the specific effects of slavery, both to distinguish what is

innate from what really belongs to this condition, and to estimate the qualities of those who have been slaves at their true worth under natural laws of development. It is because this is often neglected, that the negro's friends and his enemies differ so widely in describing his character.

The freedmen of Port Royal have been regarded as the lowest of their race in America. On account of their insulation from the few currents of intelligence that find their way to the plantations of the mainland, they are probably less raised from their original degradation than the majority of the blacks,—an impression that is confirmed by comparing them with the refugees who have escaped from the interior of the State. Three years we have passed with these people, knowing them intimately in all the relations of life. Our experience therefore is narrow, but at least neither distance nor the light that is most favorable lends coloring to our view.

The first inquiry in regard to them naturally concerns their intellect. Of the mental faculties, those in close connection with the outward senses are alone developed. That they observe well, is proved by their quickness in imitation; and their memory often surprises persons used to note-books and memoranda. But while they apprehend and hold detached facts easily, they are slow to comprehend them in connection,—are deficient in the more ideal operations, which require reflection and reasoning. Hence arises an appalling mental inaccuracy. Nothing reveals more strikingly this mental degradation than the confusion of ideas that blurs their common statements. It even accounts for much of their apparent dishonesty, and most curiously distorts the structure of their language. An intercourse of several months is needed thoroughly to understand their jumbled speech. Their minds are by no means inactive, however, though the range of thought is so limited; nor does their ignorance appear dulness. The impression made by a short acquaintance with the Sea Island negroes, and confirmed by a longer one, is that they have capacity, but lack ability,—the term properly applicable to the mind which by discipline has control of its powers. That the faculty exists dormant and awaits its training is indicated by the fact that in many

individuals it is already partially developed. The slight education obtained by familiarity with white people has, for instance, lifted the class of house servants to a decidedly higher grade of intelligence, and rough talent is not unfrequently met with that compels genuine respect.

Of course the instruction which the children principally have received during the last three years cannot have visibly affected this condition. It is to these children alone, and not at once to them, that we may fairly look for evidence of greater mental ability than that exhibited by their parents. Many friends of the Port Royal movement have a very exaggerated notion of the extent of the education already accomplished there. We have even been asked, how many negroes were yet qualified to take the place of teachers. Perhaps the teachers, for want of material to form definite reports, were obliged to make general statements at first, and may have colored them too warmly. Attention has been given chiefly to reading, spelling, and writing. The higher classes have gone through the multiplication table, and in many schools the cardinal operations of arithmetic, with a little geography and history, have been introduced. None can read with perfect confidence, few without frequent hesitation. The majority of the scholars are young children still in their First or Second Primer. In writing and spelling, for the length of time spent, the relative advancement has been greater than in reading. From two plantations nearly thirty men enlisted in the summer of 1864; and of the brisk correspondence which immediately ensued, three quarters of the letters came from camp in the well-known chirography of Sammy Simmons, Jerry Polite, or others of the school-boys who had learned their alphabet since emancipation. With children more ignorant at first than our most neglected street-wanderers, and amid all the difficulties which beset any new undertaking in so unsettled a place and time, the progress thus described is at least satisfactory to those engaged in the work. One who only knows what ignorance is from the worst that we see at the North, can hardly conceive the poverty of ideas which here prevails. The primers, for instance, contain few words with which a white child is not already more or less familiar; but to the learner here they introduce very many of whose sound and meaning he knows noth-

ing. This is a deficiency which schools alone cannot at once supply. But in the mere knowledge of reading and writing, the teachers generally say that their pupils advance about as rapidly as white children. Every one is proud of a few who would anywhere be called good scholars. The statement has been made, that in some of the schools at the North for colored children, careful observation indicates that the scholars up to the age of twelve, and in the degree of attainment then usually reached, appear to be fully equal to white children ; but that beyond this point they fall behind. Experience at Port Royal has not been sufficient to test the question ; but it is more than probable that the untrained mind of generations will reveal its weakness just where the higher faculties begin to come into exercise.

Comparatively few adults attend the schools at Port Royal ; their work and their conscious stiffness of mind deter them. But books are very widely distributed, and many with good success are picking their own way through the words. Nearly every school-child is a teacher in the family. It is painful to hear how humbly the men recognize the superiority of " white sense " ; and believing, as they do, that the secret of it lies in reading and writing, they fully appreciate the advantages of education. Even where they feel too old or too busy to acquire it themselves, they are very eager to secure it for their children ; and in most places the children love the schools as white children love a holiday, often coming two, three, and four miles regularly from their homes. This is due in great part, doubtless, to the characters of the women engaged as teachers. They have brought to their work a courage and endurance, and in most cases a refinement and an enthusiasm, with which the slight salary, that barely pays their necessary expenses, has evidently no connection.

We turn to a richer part of the nature of the black race ; but not with the conviction that in the quality of their emotions we can testify to as much excellence as many of their friends are wont to claim for it. Feeling certainly predominates in their life. It gives picturesqueness to their ideas and a dramatic vividness to their conversation ; it reveals itself in their fondness for color and for music ; and, much more than reason, it prompts their action. But the act is often only a beginning,

because the motive dies. The surface everywhere is springy, but the springs lack depth, and the waters subside almost as easily as they appear. In spontaneity, intenseness, and briefness, their emotion constantly suggests that of children, and can be excited and directed like theirs. Yet this weakness—the same immaturity that runs through their whole nature—has its good side. If the nobler passions are short-lived, so also are the bad. A white man marvels at the freedom from vindictiveness with which they speak of their old masters. We have never seen the man or woman who did not prefer his present state to the care of the best owner, yet we have heard of more than one “blessed master,” and of many who were “very well”; while the common story of their hardness and cruelty is seldom more than a memory. It is oftener accompanied with pity for their present condition of exile and poverty, than with any expression of malignity. Life has taught the negroes to pity; and no feeling can be so easily moved or so confidently appealed to. It takes but little also to obtain their good-will and gratitude; they think much of a cordial greeting, and patient friendliness is sure to win their hearts. Their gratitude, however, is that of smiles and promises, and votive offerings of eggs, and only lasts during fair weather. It is not their fault that a general suspicion of white men lies deeper than trust in this or that individual. Accustomed to kindness only in the form of an owner’s interested protection, they cannot appreciate disinterested effort in their behalf; and in the present ignorance of their own rights and real advantage, they will sometimes turn on those whom they have long regarded as benefactors. That devoted, self-forgetful attachment of which the slaveholders boast we are sure rarely lasts longer than the connection is necessary.

Contrary to our expectation, we have never seen parents more apathetic. Certainly the expression of affection is rare to any children who are old enough to get out of the way. But this is not strange. From the example hitherto always before them, their only theory of management is that of threat and force. Formerly many husbands seem to have transferred in miniature to their wives, and both parents to their children, the blows they themselves received from their masters. Wife-

beating is now infrequent, but the children are not spared the most terrific language ; the whippings, as they usually involve a chase and are often given on the run, perhaps inflict less pain than the usual New England chastisement. Moreover, child-bearing was systematically encouraged by the owner, and a child who is simply "one more little nigger for Massa," and procures a yearly exemption of a month's field-work for the mother, is a very different thing from one's own son or daughter, the child of suffering and sacrifice. The women are proud of a numerous offspring ; but in the ten to twenty names which many middle-aged women will count off to you, they usually include as many dead as living. Either from their constant labor almost to the day of confinement, or from subsequent ignorance and carelessness, a vast number of infants perish before they are three years old. And this doubtless strengthens the feeling that their children are hardly their own. We have rarely seen tears shed at a funeral, and never any of the prostrating grief which a mother usually feels. The rough pressure of slavery tends especially to crush the tender expression of feeling. The daily task must be finished, and whatever sorrow exists is locked under dumb lips. The family separations — those burials alive of slavery — may be, at the time, as heart-rending as they seem to us. But whether the sense of loss continues keen may be doubted. Of the refugees, many have left a husband or wife in slavery ; yet probably the majority have again married since gaining their freedom. It is not uncommon to form a second marriage within a few weeks after death has severed the first. It should be remembered, however, that, among people of their condition in life, marriage is as much a matter of convenience and necessity as of affection. Yet with all this the duties of family relationship are admirably observed. To the negro the plantation is his country, and "the fâm'ly" his state ; but the latter is as broad in its meaning as in its pronunciation, for on many estates the whole population consists of but two or three distinct families. Every one is aunt or uncle or cousin to every one else. The latter titles are so common that abbreviations are necessary ; at "'Cl'Arkli!" Uncle Hercules will turn his head ; and even in a quarrel with "Co' Ranty," the cousinship is not denied. Hos-

pitality, which is ever ready, may be taxed as a right by all the kin. We have seen a strapping young fellow fighting off a band of devoted relatives, who wished to tie and whip him because he would not hoe his corn; they feared that they would have to support him the next winter. Orphans are at once adopted by connections, and the sick are well nursed by their friends. The old are treated with great reverence, and often exercise a kind of patriarchal authority. Children are carefully taught "manners," and the common address to each other, as well as to the "buckra people," is marked by extreme courtesy.

It accords with what has been said to add that the negro temperament is one which dismisses responsibility and knows little of care. It is his armor; it receives oppression as sand receives the cannon-ball, neither casting it off nor being shattered by it. It is also the secret of his weakness,—inviting attack, and rendering conquest easy. They certainly seem to be a light-hearted, laughing race, finding far more joys than sorrows in life. To the Anglo-Saxon of this century the burden of slavery would sadden every thought and moment. With the negro, it has crushed and dwarfed his nature,—an effect which he but little realizes,—and added a certain amount of physical suffering to his lot. But unless it be very constant, it is not physical suffering which sobers a man's life. The harder masters have indeed left their private mark upon their people for the Yankees now to read. We remember one plantation where the people seemed to be still cowering under an angry hand; and the neighbors on both sides, jovial as any on the island, told us stories enough of Isaac Fripp amply to explain the fact. Many of the plantations at Port Royal can furnish for each back a tale of cruelty, and from any one island can be collected of the terrible cases enough to stock a library of "Uncle Tom" novels. Yet as the majority of owners probably preserved a kind of order in their punishments, and a profitable degree of care for their property, we doubt if the slaves, as a class, suffered as much, body and mind together, as the lowest classes in our Northern cities suffer from want, anxiety, and responsibility. This is to say nothing in the behalf of slavery. The eye that at all discerns God's plan in human na-

ture sees nothing more damning in the institution. And yet it is a favorite stand-point of the South-side view,—as if good treatment of the brute exculpates him who takes a man for his brute. Nobody denies the heathenism that lurks in modern society and makes life a burden to the poor man; but if all its concentrated iniquity could be traced out and fastened upon one set of individuals, how the world would howl them out of existence!—and that is the case in regard to the Southern curse and its authors. As the deadened sense is beyond the reach of pain, as careless merriment is natural to children, so this ungrown and stupefied race are gay under the system for which they are nevertheless so eager to exchange the hardships of liberty.

It is a touching fact in this connection, that almost all the negro airs are plaintive and in the minor key, although the singers shout out the choruses lustily, not sadly. The music seems to come from a source deeper than the habitual laugh, as if it were the low, uninterpreted remonstrance of the soul against the wrong of which it is numbly conscious.

One cause of their resignation is allied with their faith. In some degree they are fatalists. For instance, “a man never dies before his time,” they are fond of saying; and so literally do they accept the belief, that they have been known to give up exertion to save life in cases of sickness where “the time” seemed to have come. This tendency to abandon themselves to what seems the unavoidable explains much of the apathy with which they endured their lot. In questioning several of the most intelligent as to their own feeling in regard to slavery, while still in that condition, the answer was always to the same effect: “It seemed strange; but we met it so,”—that is, were born to it,—“and our masters said that the Bible made it right, so we believed it.” They have no energy in front of an apparent necessity; and their servitude seemed as much a law of nature as their death.

It is encouraging, because it gives direction to future effort, to see how slavery is laid in and built up of ignorance. Pure ignorance not only keeps the slaves quiet, but the same shadow envelops the whole of Southern society; it is its very blackness that prevents the non-slaveholders from seeing the object which

causes it. It is said that, whatever be the end of the war, slavery is already virtually destroyed. Possibly; but we fear that many, to whom deliverance had only been a light breaking in the North, would sink back under a heavier fate than ever, if the promise of the dawn should fail. Deliverance must come from without, directly or indirectly. We do not think a general insurrection would ever have been attempted. The Slave States wisely threw obstacles in the way of emancipation. The more completely the dark skin was identified with the position of a slave, the greater their security. The existence of an intermediate class, under the ban, but evidently possessed of power, — as in the West Indies, — could alone have started the incubus of fatal inferiority from the negro mind.

Religion contributes a large part of life's interest to the inhabitants of Port Royal; perhaps because, as the plant grows towards the light that is natural to it, they moved in the direction where alone they had free action. Not only their soul, but their mind finds here its principal exercise, and in great measure it takes the place of social entertainment and amusements. Three evenings in the week, and thrice again on Sundays, the plantation leader summons them to the "praise-meeting." And in pleasant weather the roads on the Sabbath are gay for miles with clean and brightly dressed travellers assembling at the central church. The prevailing belief is that of the Close-Communion Baptists, and nearly the whole church management is now in the hands of the blacks, who have their regular deacons and preachers. Subsidiary to the church are local "societies," to which "raw souls" are admitted after they have proved the reality of their "striving." This "striving" is a long process of self-examination and solitary prayer "in the bush," and so unremitting must be the devotion during this stage that even attendance at school is thought to interfere with the action of the Spirit. After a probation in the "society" follow baptism and church-membership. And as this is considered a necessary passport to heaven, membership is in great repute; children are often seen wearing the fillet which marks the "striver," and with the most wilful it is only a question of time when they will enter the fold. The church is therefore a real power in society. Members are rather looked

up to, and stricter virtue is expected of them than of others ; and the " spiritual mothers and fathers " are held in general reverence.

Their prayers are little more than earnest and touching appeals of self-abasement before a loving Saviour, the name of Jesus being repeated in nearly every clause. The preaching often exhibits real spiritual experience, and sometimes coherent thought and ingenious expression ; at funerals especially we have heard pointed and telling addresses. Their minds never appear to better advantage than in conversation on religious topics. The " shout " is a peculiar service in which a dozen or twenty jog slowly round a circle behind each other with a peculiar shuffle of the feet and shake of the arms, keeping time to a droning chant and hand-clapping maintained by the by-standers. As the exercise continues, the excitement increases, and occasionally becomes hysterical. Some religious meaning is attributed to it, as " worldly dancing " is strictly prohibited, nor are the " worldly " allowed to participate in " members' shouts." The more sensible seem to distrust the institution a little, but, if asked for an explanation, find a license in the Bible, which records, they say, that " the angels *shout* in heaven " ! A few slight traces of superstition — nothing that influences their life or worship — occasionally come to the surface. But an amusing sign of the thoroughness with which religion permeates the life is found in their exclamations. Till acquaintance with our soldiers had ripened, oaths were seldom uttered, though they had been constantly hurled at them by their masters. Yet their common conversation overflows with expressions which strike the educated ear as the height of irreverence. Any news they greet with a " Je-e-sus ! " or " Gre-a-t King ! " We have heard a deacon gape to the accompaniment of " Hebenly Marster ! " opening his jaws with the first word, and bringing them down on the last. It is more the thoughtlessness of familiarity than of indifference with them. With religious ideas decidedly material, their religious feeling seems to be a real laying-hold of spiritual truths. They bear themselves like fearless children before the Unseen Presence, — with a perfect reliance mingling an easy forgetfulness or an unthinking recognition. Calling one day at a rickety

cabin, with dirt floor, no chimney, and large holes in the roof, full of all dirt and wretchedness, the old woman who lived there, — all her relations were dead, — lean and bent with age, hobbled to the door. “You live here all alone, Aunt Phillis?” She answered instantly, and simply as a child, “Me and Jesus, massa.” They literally have lived by faith, for by it alone they have had a sense of what other men call life. Their faith has been coincident with their hope. In it they saw the equality denied to them on earth; by it only they knew a love and a rest. Therefore, God is never far from their lips or thoughts, and yet He may be much less a restraint upon action than to those who view him at a greater distance with what we deem a higher appreciation. This leads us to speak of the influence of their piety upon their morals.

Here we again strike upon the central weakness. Under slavery, so much does man take the place of God, and his law and his care that of God’s law and providence, that the will does not find its natural exercise. In speaking of the mind, capacity not developed into ability was described; the moral nature reveals the correlative fact, — the decisions of conscience not consolidated by strength of will into principles of character. They seem to have a true and even *delicate appreciation of right and wrong*. None of their vices are practised unwittingly. They fully realize also their moral responsibility, and the humble acknowledgment of the white man’s mental superiority contrasts strongly with the confident judgment which they pass on the white man’s sins. On this ground they feel sure of perfect equality. Hell is a very vivid and palpable horror to their imagination, and heaven has more than ordinary attractions to the oppressed. Yet, with all this, nothing is less common than that moral principle which is strong enough to set temptation at defiance. In saying this we admit the existence of those vices of which the negro is usually accused; but not only do we think the charges exaggerated, — on which head more hereafter, — but that the vices belong more properly to the slave than to the negro.

Laziness, dishonesty, and licentiousness are the very habits which it is impossible, even in conception, to dissociate from slavery. Would the Yankee have gained his reputation had

the possession of a smooth back been his principal motive for industry? We admit the necessity of the lash even more fully than the Southerner; for he, after asserting it as the clear proof of sloth unequalled, will next extol the success of his institution by adducing this or that plantation on which "the whip is seldom used, and the people all work cheerfully." The more there are of such, the more they disprove his own charge. But we are willing to believe, we do believe, that the real motive which underlies *every* slave's exertion is his sense of powerlessness under a master's will. It may be the master's own whip, or his neighbor's, which keeps the fact before him. As to dishonesty, it is the slave's only weapon of self-defence against abuse which must approach murder before the law furnishes him any protection, and it is the implement by which he ekes out the necessities of life with which his owner supplies him. The ration among the Sea Islands was a peck of corn per week during seven months of the year, and a bushel of sweet potatoes in the remaining five. A quart of salt came once a month, and during the hardest work a little pork or beef and molasses was added weekly. Of clothing, scant materials for one winter and one summer suit were given, and a blanket once in three or four years. The houses are cabins twenty feet by twelve, usually, but not always, provided with a floor and a partition. A quarter of an acre of ground — the poorest — was sometimes allowed each hand for private cultivation. Three holidays in the year, at Christmas, they called their own. Medical attendance was of course secured. This is literally the average amount of provision which the slaves received; it varied above or below this mark according to the wealth and humanity, or the partiality, of the owner. For this he claimed the whole time of his slaves, while their market value swelled the schedule of his wealth. The slave pilfers his orange-trees — and is by nature a thief! The master and mistress sit in the house; he toils not, neither does she spin; — the slave shirks his work in the sun, and lies to escape the whipping. In the name of justice, whom are we to call to account for want of energy and honesty? Licentiousness also was not only encouraged by the example, but often by the regulations, of the master. On the Sea Islands the plantation is a rare exception

on which the white family has not contributed to populate the negro houses. The practice pursued with so much publicity, and often with violence, was in itself sufficient to reduce public opinion among the negroes to the lowest ebb. The wedding service was very infrequent; a husband or wife could be sold; reluctant marriages were sometimes compelled. As the children go with the mother, it is to the owner's advantage to have all his men marry on his own plantation, a practice fruitful of the evils both of intermarriage and unlawful indulgence, and one which, by furnishing husbands for all, prevents the penalty which attaches to a bad reputation. Thus all the props which society usually affords to chastity are changed under slavery into stumbling-blocks.

Apart, therefore, from any natural tendency, the *condition* alone of the slave amply accounts for the existence of the main defects of his character and his bad habits. And yet it is upon the ground of their existence that the Northerner points his sneer or excuses his indifference, and that the Southerner justifies his institution,—nay, seriously calls it God's appointed means of civilization. Ignorance and vice necessitate servitude, he argues, but he omits the other half of the circle,—slavery produces vice and maintains ignorance. In fairness, the severest inference from these facts is the admission already made, that the negro's will is weak and his nature plastic,—weak and plastic to that degree that pressure has forced these vices into peculiar prominence. Till we know him under natural conditions of growth, it is illogical as well as unjust to call the vice itself inherent. And it becomes hard to repress our indignation when we try to *lift* our thoughts to the purity and disinterestedness of those men, North and South, who are most apt to abuse this race of slaves for their original sin. Under the most favorable circumstances, it will be very long before the negro enjoys the same conditions of success as those which determine the character and prosperity of the white man; yet it is always with ourselves, at our present height, that we involuntarily compare him. The latest, fullest, and most accurate work on the subject, that of Cochin, would relieve emancipation from the stigma which ignorance has always attached to the experiment in the West Indies, were it not for

the prejudice which usually lies behind such ignorance. Our national experience of emancipation is limited to the three years of the war, a period only adequate to give to expectation the cast either of fear or of hope. Still, if those faults which flourished under the old system have acquired a new and sudden growth since restraint has been removed, we may already with good reason conclude that the principal cause is not that which we have shown to be a sufficient cause ; but if the opposite process of withering and decay at once begins, the inference is as strong that that sufficient is also the actual cause.

Let us first call to mind the circumstances amidst which freedom found these people. For four or five generations black men, in these islands, had bent their backs and dropped their sweat under the southern sun, in obedience to a white man whom they called master. For a year, like other infants, each had enjoyed existence unconscious of God's coloring, and all it meant ; but as instinct changed to sense, there came a recognition of the truth of things. God's sky was blue, his grass was green ; — God's " massa " was white, God's " nigger " black. As a child he learned to fetch and carry ; but when strength and stature made him fit, he followed his parents to the field, and for fifty years, with hoe in hand, he passed between his cabin and the cotton-rows. Then, if he had worked hard and well, he spent a few years sitting in the sun, and died ; and once again he gained fellowship in the human race. Death granted him six feet of earth as well as his master. He had loved a woman whom he called wife — as long as that master pleased ; and the children that had played around his door had his blood in their veins ; but that — nay, possibly not even that — was his only claim to them. He had known what it was to suffer both the natural pains which God's love and providence ordain, and also those which man invents and applies in wanton anger. And this race had its Land of Promise, the North. It was prophesied in their master's curses ; the vision of it lay in their own despair. Of late, those curses had been growing more bitter and more frequent ; and the negroes felt that something, they knew not what, was approaching. One day, in cotton-planting time, they heard the dull booming of guns at Charleston. All

day it lasted, and the next morning ; and then their owners were jubilant and boasting ; and these people learned a new word, "Secession." Amid the stir and confusion that followed, they went to and from the field as usual, save that the daily task was a little increased. That summer they tended the largest crop ever planted on the Sea Islands. But when the crop was thrown by for the season, instead of cutting marsh-grass, as usual, the men were sent to Hilton Head and Bay Point, and helped to build two forts there, and returned. At length, one morning in late autumn, — they were storing corn and picking cotton that day, — again they heard guns, "nearer, clearer, deadlier than before." Admiral Dupont was proclaiming liberty at Hilton Head ! They dropped the work, never again to be resumed by the hands of slaves, and went home freedmen. For two days there was a scene of hurried flight, with wringing of hands and wailing voices, — so they tell us ; and in those two days the white population vanished, leaving the furniture in the rooms, clothes in the press, and in most cases the people in their houses. A few blacks, chiefly house-servants, drivers, or boatmen, went with their masters, but most of these escaped within a month ; and of the five thousand slaves living on the Port Royal Islands "when the guns fired at Bay Point," — which has become the popular era, the year of the Lord indeed to the Sea Island negroes, — we doubt if half as many hundreds are now absent from their homes. Thus, without one moment's preparation, no debating on the part of friends, no opposition from enemies, with no exertion and no anticipation of their own, at the boom of a gun, five thousand slaves lifted their heads and were free !

Very soon the Yankee soldiers appeared, picketed the islands, and established camps at Beaufort and Hilton Head. Not far in their wake followed Yankee traders ; and soon agents were appointed to collect and ship the cotton crop, of which a large part had already been picked. This gave temporary employment to the plantation hands, while many entered the service of their protectors in the camps. In March of 1862, before the cotton agents had finished their operations, a motley group of men and women, teachers from the North, made its appearance in Beaufort, and was soon scattered over the plan-

tations. They found the people everywhere excited and unsettled, like lost children. Always accustomed to dependence, they still needed the word of direction. In many cases, however, they had already begun to prepare corn land for the next year's subsistence; and the teachers, who at once saw that their province covered wider ground than that of letters, encouraged them to plant all the corn and cotton possible, to secure a basis of industry throughout the year. To cultivate independence, the old gang system was generally abandoned, and to each family was allotted land, for which it was alone responsible. Schools also were immediately established, and more than anything else they served to obtain interest and confidence. The new-comers worked under great disadvantages. The army officers in sympathy with their undertaking, at its outset, were very few; and the general bearing of the soldiers and cotton agents who had visited the islands before them had contributed but little to allay distrust of the white man. It was only by the greatest patience and tact that this latter obstacle was successfully encountered. Moreover, the teachers, many of whom were soon accepted as government superintendents, were themselves hurriedly selected; most of them sincerely interested, but nearly all young, and with no experience to fit them for such work. In every sense it was an experiment,—the object indefinite, the method and means untried; it was simply a generous and ready response to a cry for help.

On the other hand, the people were all unused to their new condition. Their chosen word to describe that first year of emancipation testifies to the "confusion" of the time. Were they even free,—or were they not? And not till the next January could we answer with a hearty "Yes." The prevailing idea was that "Uncle Sam" owned them; if so, "Uncle Sam" would support them. And this impression was sustained by the presents of clothing, which, for that locality, a too abundant liberality furnished from the North, and by the necessary distribution of rations on those plantations where the owners had been accustomed to buy corn. To steady industry on the plantation there was but slight inducement. The want of proper tools and animals rendered the preparatory work late and imperfect, and thus destroyed at the beginning the laborer's animation for the

season. The wages were very small, and the payment long delayed, while the camps offered a high-priced market both for labor and the products of labor. The natural restlessness incident to so great a change also tended to divert their attention from the old routine with the hoe. Of course, amid such circumstances, mistakes were made and ridicule incurred, and the results were small compared with the hope excited by the enthusiasm of a noble cause. The plantations most favorably situated more than paid for themselves; but, as a whole, the crop of 1862 was not sufficient to cover the year's expenses. The "Contraband Fund," however, derived from the sale of the previous year's cotton, prevented any outlay on the part of the government. From the time when the early potatoes were ripe, the system of rationing was abandoned; and pauperism had ceased, except in the case of recent refugees and a few aged folk. The best proof that the ridicule, and not the effort, was misdirected, was the growing favor with which the movement was viewed as the year went by, and the real gain which the next spring made evident. The appointment of General Saxton as Military Governor of South Carolina had removed many local impediments. Few have deserved better of the Republic for true service at a time of need, than he whose manly faith in the negro has directed the course of Port Royal emancipation.

At planting time of 1863, the people showed that they had already learned one lesson. They were prompt in taking measures to insure an ample provision-crop for themselves. As before, the attention given to cotton culture varied in almost precise ratio to the distance of the plantations from the camps. The negroes remote from the soldiers planted more, and took better care of it, than in the preceding year; while those within carrying distance, who had found their poultry, gardens, and fishing far more remunerative, devoted themselves to the markets, and did little or nothing in cotton. They had become so much like white men as to go where they could get the most money, with the least labor, in the shortest time. With their prosperity, their confidence increased,—confidence in the reality of their freedom and in their ability to support themselves. Complaints of "confusion" were seldom on their lips; the

flesh-pots of Egypt, which many fondly referred to amid the first year's anxiety,—though this regret never seemed to reach the point of willingness to return to them,—no longer suggested pleasant images. Then from this consciousness of power started a general ambition to win higher prosperity. The success of the more intelligent and energetic shamed and stimulated the laggards. By the end of the second year it was evident that all stagnancy was broken up, and that a great and increasing momentum had been communicated to the impulse toward improvement. The cotton crop probably paid, besides its own expenses, the deficit in the previous year's income.

The third year came, and brought to many new responsibilities. Without stopping to discuss the policy which directed the final disposal of the lands at Port Royal, it is enough to say that in the previous spring all the abandoned lands had been put up at auction by the United States Direct Tax Commissioners for non-payment of taxes, and that almost all had been bought in by them in behalf of the government. In the course of the spring of 1864, at a second auction sale, about one half of the whole number of plantations became the property of white, and a few that of negro purchasers, under titles given by the United States government. Of the remainder, several were leased as "school farms," of which the rent was designed to secure education for different districts, while many others were roughly divided into twenty and forty acre lots and pre-empted by negroes, in accordance with instructions received from Washington. As these instructions were afterwards recalled, few of the claims have been acknowledged. But the months passed on, the people were obliged to begin planting, and in many cases they have thus far had uninterrupted possession. The superintendents were dismissed in the course of the season; and for the last few months the negroes have either been working as hired laborers for white proprietors, or cultivating little farms for themselves, without direction or assistance. One or two agents on each island have sufficed to maintain the necessary connection between the people and the government. All the proprietors were required to make contracts with their workmen, subject to General Saxton's supervision. Some preferred to give a share of the crop, usually a

third to a half, to the laborer; others offered wages which would probably average ten cents per hour; in both cases provision, land, and houses being furnished, either rent free or for a nominal rent of perhaps a bushel of corn to the acre. The latter method is found to be much the more effectual in securing constant and faithful care. Where the people had confidence in their employer, they worked more diligently than during the preceding year; but the caterpillar so ravaged the fields in September and October as to leave in most localities less than a two-thirds crop. On most of the negro lots the yield was still less. Each family had planted its three or four acres with much zeal, but little manure; and in the summer, other more immediate interests — their eggs and watermelons — obtained the earliest attention. In spite of this neglect, the present price of cotton remunerates them tenfold; and the more provident and intelligent, who did not slack their care, are just now rolling in comparative wealth. To the majority, such success will prove a stimulant to more continued exertion; to a few, the ease with which it was acquired will doubtless be an injury.

Now, has emancipation been a success? Has freedom found these slaves, or made them, men? If it be too soon to bring in a verdict upon the scanty testimony which these three years afford, a longer delay will only render the final decision more emphatically favorable to the negro. A fact before alluded to must be remembered, that we have had here upon trial the lowest and most degraded of the race. A visit to Savannah is a trip from the tenth to the fifteenth century, — so different are the people whom Sherman has delivered. From the West, the Southwest, and the Border States, wherever else emancipation has followed the track of our armies, men who are acquainted with the Port-Royalists express a similar opinion in regard to their native intelligence. The evidence is so striking on this point, that in itself it almost warrants the assumption that only common contact with common circumstances is needed to produce with the black the same results as with the white man in America. Let the decision for Port Royal, therefore, be what it may, under equal advantages better results may be expected everywhere else. For ourselves, we are satisfied with the progress made here. Yet, as the sympathy which overlooks facts

only prepares a triumph for the prejudice which arms itself with those facts, it is wise to estimate the obstacles in the path at their full size. In movements to which national attention is directed, this is especially important; for where all are watching and judging, there are many adversaries ready to pick up every stone. Duty did not free the blacks, nor will enthusiasm educate them. When the war is finished on our own terms, we have then merely got possession of the broken piece; we have still to make it stick. The South must be made a loyal, not a captured people, if we are to be United States in any sense that is worth the blood that has been shed. And the cement is ready in the form of the four million freedmen, if the North be wise enough to use it. If we see aright, it is our treatment of the negro on which depends all that the historian of the next century will sum up as the permanent result of the war. Believing, therefore, that the subject calls for all the wisdom and devotion which the best men of the country can furnish, we think it should be with slow earnestness, with caution, with the fullest appreciation of reality, rather than with shortsighted enthusiasm, that both discussion and action should be approached. It is the sober judgment which traces the present degradation to its specific sources in the past, that will prove most patient and skilful in removing it; and it is to such judgment that the signs at Port Royal will richly suggest the hope that lies in the future.

Indolence, dishonesty, and licentiousness were the principal charges against the negro. We did not deny them in regard to the slave, though we have little doubt that his vice, and even his virtue, has been exaggerated; that from both sides additional weight has been thrown into the scale which tends to raise the respectability of slavery. Gratitude and affection, by implying content, and thriftless dishonesty, by necessitating guardianship, equally reflect honor on the institution. But if the charges apply to the *negro*, the question at once springs to the lips, What would his indolence under the lash become in three years under freedom? What extreme would license and trickery attain, when the severity which could not restrain them is removed? But the answer of emancipation is very distinct, though low. It gives the lie to the negro-owner, and confirms

the theory which makes himself accountable for the degradation that he slanders. The roots of self-respect, that could never break the clod hardened and blasted by slavery, have already felt the spring-like influence of freedom, and to-day the wilderness is glad with green things.

The *quality* of industry is far more affected by circumstances than the quantity, and is therefore that which we may expect to find inferior in the new freedmen. In the absence of personal motive, industry must needs lack the element of persistence; in the absence of responsibility, it lacks forethought and finish; and with little or no education, it wants the contrivance and skill which turn the white man's industry to account. The freeman works to accomplish his ends; the slave, to end what he is obliged to accomplish. The best that can be looked for in his exertion is a fair degree of energy; and that we find. In the beginning of the day's work or the year's, the hoe flies and the excitement is real; but the interest becomes distracted, and the hands falter. Although complaints are frequent about the work that used to be required, the hardship seems to have fallen principally upon the women, and then to have been exceptional. The steady ten-hours toil of the Northern laborer is a thing almost unknown to the negro of the Sea Islands. Considering the short time spent, the small skill required, and the degree of care that can be relied on, the so-called "day's work" there is really worth less than half the wages to which the Northern farm-laborer is entitled. The price of the peculiar staple on which it is expended, and the temporary demand for labor at the camps, give it its principal value. Doubtless the negroes worked with less animation under slavery, for now in most operations the old master's task is finished in six or seven hours. Where they are paid by the job, the stronger and smarter men habitually exceed the old amount; and of course there are many exceptional cases of skill and forethought. The freedmen are said by those who have employed them in large gangs, by quartermasters, for instance, on the docks, to exhibit much greater aptitude and efficiency now than when they first entered the service. The old routine with the hoe furnished little exercise for the brain, and only accustomed them to a dull mechanical stroke. The physical conditions

necessary to develop habits of thrift and steady industry do not yet exist. In the neighborhood of military camps and excited markets, desultory effort will continue as long as camps and markets remain, because it is the most speedily profitable. In certain other districts the people's natural ignorance of the mutual rights of employer and employed, and of the true value of their labor, has produced unwillingness to plant cotton for the recent purchasers; and both policy and humanity have usually deterred such proprietors from asserting their legal claims. When peace and order return, competition and civil law will provide these necessary conditions, and experience teach the needed lessons. Indeed, they are already exerting a visible influence.

But these faults, which affect the quality and worth of the negro's industry, by no means prove his absolute supineness. Lively energy and bustling enterprise he has not; but that the desire to work for fair and *prompt* pay is almost universal has been abundantly proved. *Every* one is busy. Nearly all the able-bodied men have now enlisted on the gunboats or in the army; and of those who remain, many prefer the novelty of life at the posts, in the service of officers and quartermasters. On the plantation, house-servants, both men and women, who had never before handled a hoe, now go to the field without a murmur; and to many a gray head who had "got his freedom," i. e. been released from work by his master five years ago, the "Yankee" freedom has given a second youth. The small farmers who have neglected their cotton crops have not spent the time basking in the sun. Those who have made the most money during the last three years are usually not they who have devoted themselves to the plantation.

It should be remembered that there is essential injustice in gauging the success of emancipation by the same measure that one applies to slavery. Yet nothing is more common. Under slavery, the end of life was to raise cotton or sugar; in freedom, it is something very different, even for the negro. Then the plantation represented so many man-power, all directed to one object; the machine was simply kept in running order. Now it stands for so many living agents, with the interests, the responsibilities, and the choice of employments which freedom

brings with it. It would be strange, and argue fixed degradation, if mere negro muscle ever again makes crops equal to those raised under the organized system of slave labor. It must still furnish the great supply of labor; but it will be due to an influx of white workmen, the impulse of Northern energy and skill, and the introduction of better implements and more machinery, if our Western cotton is still to be king over its Eastern rivals.

After all, the doubt in regard to the negro's industry is expressed with more point in the form, Will his wants probably multiply as fast as the means of supplying them,—his ambition keep pace with his attainment? This is the practical question which will determine his place in society and his acceptability as a citizen; in other words, the success of emancipation. It is evident at a glance how much depends upon the position which the national policy shall assign to him. To this question no answer more emphatic and encouraging could be given at the present time, than by pointing to the evidences of prosperity that have accumulated in the homes of Port Royal. Many new houses have been built, and old ones repaired and enlarged; and, save where the soldiers are sure to volunteer as harvest hands, each has its fenced garden in the rear. Wooden chimneys have been replaced by brick. Horses, mules, and cows have gradually been purchased at no trifling price, and many a couple now ride to church in their own wagon. Inside the house there is decided improvement in cleanliness and comfort. The family hominy-pot no longer holds solitary state in the chimney-place; plates, knives, and forks are in the cupboard, and a chair or two before the fire. The common dress of both men and women is neater and more abundant, and the display on a Sunday is surprisingly bright. Their food, too, has greater variety. The corn, potatoes, and fish of their former fare is now enriched by pork, molasses, bread, sugar, and coffee. For all the more necessary groceries and cheap dry goods the demand never ceases. Flour is very frequently bought by the barrel; cloth occasionally by the piece, to cover the "fifteen in fām'ly." The amount of money spent by these lazy people is so great, that the Provost Marshal of Hilton Head lately interdicted several plantation stores, through mere disbe-

lief that the large supplies brought from the North to stock them could be intended for the purpose of legitimate trade with negroes. And no one spends his whole money. Every family has its private "nest-egg" laid by for a land sale or a horse auction. At the sale of abandoned chattels in the spring of 1864, the negroes carried off nearly the whole stock of some estates, bidding against white men. On a single plantation three men paid each upwards of two hundred dollars for the horse that was to "call him massa"; and of the three, two have since bought new horses at a still higher price. In one of the earlier publications of the Boston Educational Commission, an active old man named Limus was spoken of, who is now on the high road to a fortune. Though he lives twenty miles from Hilton Head, by his guns and dogs, his boats and seines and hired hands, he makes himself the great market-man of that post. Besides this, he jockeys in horses with enormous profits, and plants cotton on a large scale. For the coming four years he has leased a tract of land for an annual rent of three hundred dollars. He keeps a cart for his work, a sulky for himself, a buggy for his family, and a span of better horses than are owned by most white men on St. Helena. In conversation, his ideas show the shrewdness of insight and the truth of conception which only accompany native strength of intellect. He has not a drop of white blood, nor had he ever received the slightest education. His enterprise and talent are all to the credit of the uncombed woolly head.

Next in importance to the question of self-support, thus satisfactorily answered, is that which inquires concerning the freedman's respect for law. Little is to be feared on this account. There has been none of the reaction which might naturally be expected after a bond so tight has been suddenly severed. Crimes against the person are rare; against property, they consist usually of petty larcenies, and are pretty numerous, but much less so than the common reputation of the slave would lead one to suppose. It would seem by no means difficult to bridge the gap between the old subservience to a master's will and a ready obedience to civil authority. The black man's nature, his habits, and his increasing participation in the wants, all tend to make him a willing subject to the restraints, of civilization.

But there is a lesson to be learned first. Heretofore law, "massa's law," has only represented *restraint* and *punishment*. As soon as the negro has come to feel that its real object is *protection*, he will warmly turn to it. And it is therefore specially desirable that his first impressions of civil courts should be connected with prompt and vigorous justice. Any feeble-handed power will not be recognized as a power at all. To supply for the time an evident need, an informal court, styled "The Plantation Commission," and composed of superintendents, was instituted by General Saxton, and has proved of much service in introducing to the people the ideas of civil appeal and control.

But it is far less to the negroes' sense of fear, than to their real appreciation of right and their growing self-respect, that we look for their good citizenship. Their progress has not been confined to material concerns, though in that direction it can of course be best discerned and described. Family feeling appears to have gained strength and purity. We think the evidences of unchastity on the part of the young are somewhat less frequent. The fearful stories told of West Indian immorality have not the remotest application to these islands. Many weddings have been celebrated in church, and for a separation and second marriage an appeal to the law is necessary. Quarrels between husband and wife are more seldom than at first referred for adjudication, and there seems to be with each a growing pride in the faithful discharge of reciprocal duties. The women, being no longer mere field-laborers, spend much more time in household employments and with their children. Both parents are gentler and more apt to caress the young ones than we remember them to have been in the first year. A more radical change in their occupations must take place than is at present possible, before the family meal and similar domestic customs can prevail; but, on the whole, dignity and responsibility have certainly been added to the relations of the house.

Nothing is more remarkable than the rapidity with which the old habits of dependence have been cast off. If a people were really unfit for freedom, it seems likely that emancipation would render them not only paupers, but a race of beggars; for in old times they were wont to rely for everything

on a white man's care. It was not strange, therefore, that during the first year complaints of wants and petitions for help were constantly brought to us. The negroes are now always willing to accept a gift, but it is rare to hear a request that takes the form of beggary. After testing the possibility, they seemed to recognize the manliness of self-support, and in many instances of word and deed have shown pride in standing alone. The same feeling is tending to check dishonesty. It is no longer the only refuge from injustice, the only means of obtaining luxuries. In those circumstances, however, which are most akin to their old position, where they expect punishment or distrust promises, they still instinctively turn to their old resource; and so strongly are they united, as of old, to shield an offender, that the oath before a court of justice often proves no barrier to falsehood. Till law is recognized as the strong power in society, the righteous man fears the consequences of his own virtue, fights baseness with its own weapon, and becomes a coward before a stronger force than his own. In like manner, Cuffy, who, though a "member," is not a moral hero or martyr, tells a lie even on the Bible, rather than send his friend to jail by his evidence, and live in plantation odium for six months afterwards. In our own experience we have found few who could not usually, only one who could always, be relied on. An open-eyed trust is usually a sufficient guard against cheating, though it is expedient to scrutinize all work before accepting it. With the majority it seems to be more a matter of good feeling than of principle. If they do not like you, or, which is the same thing, if they think you are taking advantage of them, they are ready to take advantage of you in self-defence; if you treat them honorably and win their confidence, they will be found to deserve yours. This latter fact leaves the bitterness of the master's charge on his own lips, and implies with every accession of knowledge an increase of manliness. Already we discern such a growth, and would each year trust them more. In the character of the more thoughtful and responsible, it is very curious at present to watch the honesty thus hardening into principle.

Greater courage also is manifested, — both that which overcomes obstacles and that which faces danger. The slavish ser-

vility to the white man is fast dropping out even of the forms of courtesy. The negroes have a kind of daring which requires excitement and support from some extraneous source. Implicit faith in able officers, combined with willingness to give unthinking obedience and throw off all responsibility, fit them to display the fierce gallantry which is now unquestioned; but under officers whom they distrusted, or circumstances which involved a prolonged strain on their moral endurance, they might prove, we fear, more dangerous to friends than to enemies. The truth must be owned that the Port-Royalists have shown great apathy in sacrificing anything to secure their liberty. The real volunteers have been comparatively few. By far the larger part of the native regiments have been filled by wholesale conscription; and the conscription has been carried out by hunting, and in several instances shooting down the fugitives. The antipathy to military service began with General Hunter's attempt in 1862, the first of the war, which proved a failure only because government would not then accept the policy of enrolling black soldiers. The men were taken by his soldiers from the field, leaving the hoe standing in the unfinished row, hurried down to Hilton Head, and detained there for three months, subjected to the hostility and insults of all the white regiments, and apparently befriended by the commanding general alone. At the end of that time, those who had not already deserted were dismissed without a cent of pay. From that time the matter has been reagitated at intervals with little judgment or energy, and has kept the island families in a constant state of dread. But the late measures originated by the presence of recruiting agents from the North have proved more successful. Their large bounties have induced many to enlist, who had hitherto set the order at defiance by retreating to the woods at the first alarm. Nearly every able-bodied man is now in uniform; and the letters of those who were most reluctant to go indicate cheerful content and a soldierly pride in the service. No training could be better adapted to stamp out the past, and to lay a solid foundation for the qualities and habits of their new character,—that of the free Southern laborer.

Such are the signs at Port Royal. To ourselves they give a

hope so confident, that we have had no fear in representing facts in the soberest light. Judging from the activity already shown, the improvement already made, we feel certain that the "institution" of freedom will at once be far more than self-supporting, and that, with the paralysis of slavery fairly thrown off, the negro will eventually contribute to the strength and honor of the country in relations far more important than that of simply furnishing its cotton, sugar, and rice. Yet it is no light or short task to which our nation is approaching. Not only do their old habits cling to the freedmen as they rise, but their ignorance will betray them into new and perilous mistakes. We look for slow progress and much disappointment. Emancipation from slavery is a convulsion in the moral and social being of a race. The very conditions of existence are changed; principles once powerful are subverted and disappear, and new ones take their place. For a time discouragement and failure await the eager restorer. Let no one expect, then, as he glances at Port Royal, to find that every prospect pleases. It is a waste place occupied by a bewildered people. We only claim at present that nature has begun its adoption,—that the long disinherited are showing proof that manhood is their rightful possession.

ART. II. — *Rélations des Jésuites contenant ce qui s'est passé de plus remarquable dans les Missions des Pères de la Compagnie de Jésus dans la Nouvelle France. Ouvrage publié sous les Auspices du Gouvernement Canadien. Quebec. 1858. 3 vols. 8vo.*

WE place at the head of this article the name of the above work, or rather collection of many works, because, in respect to the early Indian tribes, the Relations of the Jesuits are by far the most full and trustworthy authority. With the aid of these and the other writers, old and recent, who have entered or touched upon the subject, we propose to examine the primitive condition of these communities, choosing the period between